

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 L-03 SS-15 NSC-05

H-01 /054 W

-----112113Z 130792 /75-70

P R 111941Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1017

INFO PANCANAL

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DEPT ALSO PASS S/AB-MR. LAZAR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS-PANAMANIAN MEDIA PLAY

REF: PANAMA 1345

1. PANAMANIAN MEDIA COVERAGE ON THIS SUBJECT HAS CONTINUED FAIRLY LIGHT FRIDAY, MARCH 11.

2. SEMI-INDEPENDENT "STAR AND HERALD" PRINTED A SECOND ARTICLE ON PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM SESSION WITH NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE (CONEP) WEDNESDAY NIGHT. THERE WAS NO APPARENT REASON FOR THE REPETITION OF THE STORY, WHICH CENTERED ON RESPONSES BY ARQ. EDWIN FABREGA DEALING WITH: REBUTTAL OF THESIS THAT CANAL IS OR WILL BECOME OBSOLETE; LANDS AND WATERS (MOST OF CANAL ZONE IS NOT DEVELOPED AND IS NECESSARY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT); AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF A NEW TREATY TO PANAMA. ARTICLE CONTINUED WITH IPS REPORT ON DEPARTMENT PRESS BACKGROUNDER ON NEGOTIATIONS. COMPANION "ESTRELLA", HOWEVER, CARRIED NOTHING FURTHER ON STORY TODAY.

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3. OF GOP-GUIDED ERSA PAPERS, ONLY AFTERNOON "REPUBLICA" FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 10, HAS MENTIONED US BACKGROUNDER WITH A PROMINENT UPI STORY IN ENGLISH AND A MUCH LESS PROMINENTLY-PLACED EFE WIRE STORY IN SPANISH SECTION. "MATUTINO" AND "CRITICA" FOR MARCH 11 AGAIN OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO THIS STORY.

4. "CRITICA" DEVOTED ITS ENTIRE LEAD EDITORIAL MARCH 11 TO REHASH OF MEETING WITH CONEP. AGAIN, ONE SAW LITTLE POINT TO THE ITEM, WHICH MERELY REPEATED PRINCIPAL POINTS CARRIED IN YESTERDAY'S NEWS ARTICLES WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL COMMENT ON THEM.

5. "MATUTINO" AND "CRITICA" ALSO CARRIED SMALL ITEMS ANNOUNCING IN SINGLE RELEASE THAT: A) TORRIJOS CONTINUES TO RECOVER FROM FLU ATTACK IN PAITILLA MEDICAL CENTER; AND B) TREATY NEGOTIATORS ROMULO ESCOBAR AND EDWIN FABREGA, AND EDUCATION MINISTER ROYO DEPARTED THURSDAY FOR COSTA RICA AND MEXICO TO BRIEF THOSE GOVERNMENTS ON NEGOTIATIONS. ARTICLES NOTED THAT HAD ILLNESS NOT INTERVENED, TORRIJOS WOULD HAVE GONE TO VISIT LOPEZ PORTILLO HIMSELF.

6. COMMENT:GOVERNMENT-GUIDED MEDIA FAILURE TO PLAY UP OR COMMENT ON DEPARTMENT BACKGROUNDER ON NEGOTIATIONS IS MOST NOTABLE FEATURE OF MEDIA COVERAGE FOR PAST TWO DAYS. MEDIA COVERAGE SINCE FEBRUARY ROUND IN GENERAL CAN BEST BE SUMMED UP AS AIR OF WATCHFUL WAITING FOR US TO MAKE NEXT MOVE--A MOVE WHICH GOVERNMENT-GUIDED MEDIA HAVE GIVEN NO INDICATION THAT THEY ARE READY TO ANTICIPATE.
JORDEN

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